

Investigation by the Department of Telecommunications and Energy on its own motion, pursuant to G.L. c. 159, § 105 and G.L. c. 164, § 76 to investigate increasing the penetration rate for discounted electric, gas and telephone service.

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## HEARING OFFICER'S REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

### I. INTRODUCTION

On December 19, 2001, the Department of Telecommunications and Energy ("Department"), pursuant to G.L. c. 159, § 105 and G.L. c. 164, § 76, opened an investigation into increasing the penetration rate for discounted electric, gas and telephone service. The Department received initial and reply comments from interested parties and established working groups to identify issues and recommend proposals. On September 17, 2002, the working groups submitted recommendations to the Department. The working groups' recommendations are on file for public view at the Department's offices during business hours at One South Station, Boston, MA 02110. Copies of the initial and reply comments can also be viewed on the Department's website [www.mass.gov/dpu/](http://www.mass.gov/dpu/).

### II. COMMENTS

In light of the working groups' recommendations and consistent with the Department's statutory authority in G.L. c. 164, § 1F(4)(i), the Department now seeks responses to the following questions:

1. The working groups recommended the use of a check box, similar to that used by fuel assistance agencies, for new applicants to the Department of Transitional Assistance ("DTA") and the Division of Medical Assistance ("DMA"), granting the agencies authorization to release eligibility information to utilities. As an alternative to the use of a check box, please comment on whether it would be more effective to require applicants to authorize the release of eligibility information as a condition to applying for public benefit programs. What additional procedures, if any, should be addressed by the Department in this investigation?
2. Evaluate the costs and benefits of moving to a model where a central entity gathers relevant information from Community Action Programs /grantees and government agencies (DTA, DMA, etc.) on eligible customers for the discount rate and shares this information with utilities. In addition, the Department is considering the possibility of utilizing MassCARES, a technology based initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Please discuss whether MassCARES would be a feasible Central Information Storehouse for an automated matching program for the discount rate. Information on the MassCARES program is available at [www.masscares.org](http://www.masscares.org)

The Department would like to provide an opportunity for interested persons to comment on the recommendations. Comments must be submitted to the Department no later than Thursday, November 14, 2002. One original and 15 copies of all comments should be filed with Mary Cottrell, Secretary of the Department, One South Station, Boston, MA 02110. Comments should not exceed 30 pages in length and must be double-spaced.

All comments must also be submitted to the Department in electronic format using one of the following methods: (1) by e-mail attachment to [dte.efiling@state.ma.us](mailto:dte.efiling@state.ma.us); or (2) on a 3.5" floppy diskette, IBM-compatible format. The text of the e-mail or the diskette label must specify: (1) an easily identifiable case caption; (2) docket number; (3) name of the person or company submitting the filing; and (4) a brief descriptive title of document. The electronic filing should also include the name, title and phone number of a person to contact in the event of questions about the filing. Text responses should be written in either Word Perfect (naming the document with a ".wpd" suffix) or in Microsoft Word, (naming the document with a ".doc" suffix). Data or spreadsheet responses should be compatible with Microsoft Excel. Documents submitted in electronic format will be posted on the Department's Website, [www.mass.gov/dpu](http://www.mass.gov/dpu). If there are any questions about this request please contact the Hearing Officer, Michael Killion at 617.305.3619.

cc: Service List

Mary Cottrell, Secretary

Paul G. Afonso, General Counsel